

Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization.

Remarks in Alamogordo, New Mexico

October 24, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming out on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. Laura and I are so pleased to be here in Alamogordo. It's great to be back in the great State of New Mexico.

We're getting close to voting time, and I'm here to ask for your vote and for your help. Tell your friends and neighbors in the coffee shops and community centers and places of worship, we have a duty to vote in the United States. Get them headed to the polls. Don't overlook discerning Democrats like Zell Miller of Georgia. And when you get them headed to the polls, remind them if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to vote for Bush-Cheney.

I'm keeping really good company in the First Lady. You know, when I—I don't know if you know this or not, we both grew up kind of around the corner. As a matter of fact, we were in the seventh grade together at San Jacinto Junior High in Midland. And then we became reacquainted. She was a public school librarian when I met her again.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*—moment!]

The President. It sure was. When I asked her to marry me, she said, "Fine, just make me a promise." I said, "Okay, what is it?" She said, "Promise me I'll never have to give a political speech." [*Laughter*] I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she did not hold me to that promise. She's giving speeches all over the country, and when people see her speak, they see a compassionate, warm, strong First Lady.

And I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. Now, look, I admit it—I admit it, he does not have the waviest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. I picked him because of his judgment, his experience. He's getting the job done for the American people.

I'm proud to be sharing this platform with a great United States Senator in Pete

Domenici. You know, if you had to describe Senator Domenici, you would call him a class act. And he is. I know you're proud of him, and Laura and I are proud to call him friend. I want to thank Congressman Steve Pearce and his wife, Cynthia.

I want to thank the Alamogordo Tiger Band for being here today. It's good to be in country where the cowboy hats outnumber the ties. I want to thank the people who have helped put on this rally and are putting up the signs, making the phone calls, turning people out to vote. There is no doubt in my mind that with your help, we will carry New Mexico and win a great victory in November. *Con su apoyo, vamos a ganar.*

You know, we've just got 9 days to go. And the voters have a clear choice between two very different candidates with dramatically different approaches and records. You know where I stand, and sometimes you even know where my opponent stands. [*Laughter*] We both have records. I'm proudly running on mine. The Senator is running from his. [*Laughter*] And there's a reason why. There is a mainstream in American politics, and my opponent sits on the far left bank. I'm a compassionate conservative and proudly so. At a time when our country has much to accomplish and much more to do, I offer a record of reform and a record of results.

This election comes down to five clear choices for America's families, five choices on issues of great consequence: your family's security; your family's budget; your quality of life; your retirement; and the bedrock values that are so critical to our families and our future.

The first clear choice is the most important, because it concerns the security of your family. All progress on every other issue depends on the safety of our citizens. This will be the first Presidential election since September the 11th, 2001. Americans will go to the polls in a time of war and ongoing threats unlike any we have faced before. The terrorists that killed thousands of innocent people are still dangerous, and they are determined to strike us again. The outcome of this election will set the direction of the war against terror. The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people.

If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch. Since that terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we've fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We've strengthened the protections for our homeland. We're reforming and strengthening our intelligence services. We're transforming our All-Volunteer Army. There will not be a draft. We're staying on the offensive. We're relentless. We are determined to protect the American people. And we're succeeding. More than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice, and the rest of them know we're on their trail.

My opponent has a very different approach. He says that September the 11th, quote, "didn't change me much at all"—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —end quote. [Laughter] And that's pretty clear. He considers the war on terror primarily a law enforcement and intelligence gathering operation. His top foreign policy advisers question whether we're even in a war at all, saying, "The war on terror is just like a metaphor, kind of like the war on poverty." Anyone who thinks we're fighting a metaphor does not understand the enemy we face. You cannot win a war if you are not convinced we are even in one.

My opponent also misunderstands our battle against insurgents and terrorists in Iraq. After voting to authorize force against Saddam Hussein, after calling it the right decision when I sent troops into Iraq, the Senator now calls it the "wrong war." The Senator used to recognize that Saddam Hussein was a gathering threat who hated America. After all, he said so. He used to recognize that Saddam was a state sponsor of terror with a history of pursuing and even using weapons of mass destruction. Even so, he said so. He used to understand that Saddam was a major source of instability in the Middle East. He said so. And when he voted to authorize force, the Senator must have recognized the nightmare scenario that terrorists might somehow access weapons of mass destruction.

Senator Kerry seems to have forgotten all that as his position has evolved during the course of this campaign. You might call it election-year amnesia. [Laughter] I know then—I knew then and I know now that America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell. We have a different point of view when it comes to defending America. Senator Kerry now calls Iraq a "diversion." But the case of just one terrorist shows how wrong his thinking is. A man named Zarqawi is responsible for planting car bombs and beheading Americans in Iraq. He ran a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan—until coalition forces arrived. And then he fled to Iraq, where he's fighting us today. He swore his allegiance to Usama bin Laden. If Zarqawi and his associates were not busy fighting Iraqi and American forces in Iraq, what does Senator Kerry think they would be doing? Peaceful small-business owners? [Laughter] Running a benevolent society? [Laughter]

Our troops will defeat Zarqawi and his likes overseas in Iraq so we do not have to face them here at home.

The choice in this election could not be clearer. You cannot lead our Nation to decisive victory on which the security of every American family depends if you do not see the true dangers of the post-September the 11th world. My opponent has a September 10th point of view. At his convention, he declared that his strategy will be to respond to attacks after America is hit.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Those were his words. That would be too late. In our debates, he said we can defend America if we pass a "global test."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm not making that up. He was standing right about right there. Listen, I'll work with our friends and allies. We'll continue to build strong coalitions to keep us secure. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I want to thank those who wear our Nation's uniform. I want to thank our great United States military. It's such an incredible honor to be the Commander in Chief of such

a great military. And our military is great because of the character of the men and women who wear our uniform. I want to thank the veterans who are here today for having set such a great example. I want to thank the military families who are here for your sacrifice.

And I want to assure you that we'll make sure our troops have got all the tools necessary to complete their missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. That's why I went to the Congress and asked for \$87 billion in supplemental funding to support our troops in harm's way. It was a vital request. It was necessary. And we got great bipartisan support. I want you to tell your friends and neighbors this startling statistic: Only 4 Members of the United States Senate—4 out of 100—voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against the funding necessary to support our troops in combat, and 2 of those 4 were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You might remember, when asked to explain his vote he said, and I quote, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." [Laughter] I've spent quite a bit of time in New Mexico. I've never heard anybody talk that way in this State. [Laughter] They kept pressing him, and he's given a lot of answers about his vote. One of the most interesting ones of all was he said, "It's a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in harm's way.

And we will continue to protect in America by spreading freedom. I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I believe that free nations do not breed resentments and export terror. Free nations become allies in the war against terror.

I want you to tell your children what has taken place in a brief period of time. Tell them what happened in Afghanistan. Because we defended ourselves, because we upheld the doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're as equally guilty as the terrorists," 25 million people live in freedom in Afghanistan. It wasn't all that long ago that young girls couldn't go to school because the ideologues of hate, the Taliban, had such a dim view of the world. And if their mothers didn't toe their line, they were taken into

public squares and whipped and sometimes killed in a sports stadium. Because we acted, millions of people in Afghanistan went to vote in a Presidential election. The first voter was a 19-year-old woman. Freedom is on the march.

Iraq will have Presidential elections. Think how far that country has come from the days of torture chambers and mass graves. It is in our interests that we spread liberty. It's in our interests that we help societies become free. I believe people want to be free. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

The second clear choice in this election concerns the family's budget. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I pledged to lower taxes for American families. I kept my word. We doubled the child credit to \$1,000 per child. We want to help people raise their children. We reduced the marriage penalty. The Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not penalize marriage. We dropped the lowest bracket to 10 percent to help our working families. We reduced income taxes for everybody who pays taxes. As a result of our policies, real, after-tax income—that's money in your pocket—has gone up by about 10 percent since I became the President.

When you're out there rounding up the vote, remind your friends and neighbors about what this economy has been through. Six months prior to my arrival in Washington, the stock market was in serious decline. Then we had a recession. Then we had corporate scandals. And then we got attacked. And that attack cost us about a million jobs in the 3 months after September the 11th.

But our economic policies are working. This country is on the road to growth. We're growing at rates as fast as any in 20—nearly 20 years. The homeownership rate is at an alltime high in America. Our farmers and ranchers are making a living. Small businesses are flourishing. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. We've added 1.9 million new jobs in the past 13 months. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, lower than the average rate of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. And the unemployment rate in New Mexico is 5.3 percent. This economy is getting stronger.

Now, my opponent has a different plan for your budget. He intends to take a big chunk out of it. You know, he voted against the higher child credit and the marriage penalty relief, and he voted against lower tax rates. I want the people to understand that if he had had his way, the average middle class family would be paying \$2,000 more in taxes to the Federal Government.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. It's part of a pattern. All told, during his 20 years in the United States Senate, he's voted to increase taxes 98 times. That's five times for every year he's been in the Senate. I'd call that a predictable pattern. [Laughter] If a Senator does something that often, he must really enjoy it. [Laughter] During this campaign, he's made a lot of big promises too—a lot of them. As a matter of fact, he's promised about \$2.2 trillion worth of new spending. That's trillion with a "T." That's a lot even for a Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter]

So they asked him, "How you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, we'll just tax the rich." The problem is, is that his ledger doesn't add up, see. If you run up the top two brackets like he said, it's going to raise about 600 to 800 billion dollars. That's far short of 2.2 trillion. And when there's a gap like that, guess who usually gets stuck with the bill?

Audience member. We do!

The President. The good news is, we're not going to let him tax you; we're going to carry New Mexico and win a great victory on November the 2d.

The third clear choice in this election involves the quality of life for our Nation's families. A good education and quality health care are important for a successful life. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I promised to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations by reforming our public schools. I kept my word. We passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which is bringing high standards to our classrooms and making schools accountable to our parents. We're seeing great progress across this country. Math and reading scores are on the rise. We're closing the achievement gap. More and more Latino youngsters are learning how to read and write and add and subtract. And the country is better off for it. We'll build on these re-

forms. We'll extend them to our high schools so that no child is left behind in America.

We'll continue to improve lives for our families by making health care more affordable and more accessible. We'll expand health savings accounts so small businesses can cover their workers and more families are able to get the health care accounts that they manage and own. We'll expand—create association health plans so small businesses can join together and buy insurance at the same discounts that big companies are able to do. We'll help families in need by expanding community health centers, make sure every eligible child is enrolled in our Government's low-income health insurance programs.

And we're going to help patients and doctors everywhere by doing something about these junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine and running good docs out of practice. You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-personal-injury-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. And my opponent made his choice. He put a personal-injury trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I have made my choice. I'm standing with the doctors and patients of New Mexico. I am for medical liability reform—now.

We have a difference when it comes to health care. My opponent voted against health savings accounts. He's voted against association health plans. He's voted 10 times against medical liability reform. He can run from his record, but he cannot hide.

And now he's proposing a new plan, a new idea, which is a big-Government health care plan. That's what it is. It would cause about 8 million families to lose private coverage they get at work and have to go on a Government plan. Eighty percent of the people who get coverage would be enrolled with the Federal Government. We just have a different philosophy. You know, in one of the debates, he actually looked in the camera with a straight face and he said, when it comes to his health care plan, and I quote, "The Government has nothing to do with it." I could barely contain myself. [Laughter] His plan

would move America down the road to Federal control of health care, and that is wrong road for America's families.

In all we do to improve health care, we will make sure the decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC.

The fourth clear choice involves your retirement. Our Nation has made a solemn commitment to our seniors on Social Security and Medicare. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I promised to keep that commitment and improve Medicare. By adding prescription drug coverage, I kept my word. Seniors are now getting discounts on medicine with drug discount cards. Low-income seniors are getting \$600 worth of help this year and next year. And beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

We'll keep the promise of Social Security for our seniors. And we'll strengthen Social Security for generations to come. Listen, every election there is a predictable event that takes place, and that is they run TV ads saying to our seniors, "If George W. gets elected, you're not going to get your checks." That's what happened in 2000. They said, "If George W. gets elected, our seniors will not get their Social Security checks." You might remember that. In this campaign, as we're coming down the stretch, tell your friends, George W. got elected and the seniors got their checks. And the seniors will continue to get their checks. And baby boomers like me, we're in pretty good shape when it comes to the Social Security Trust.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. We need to worry about whether or not Social Security will be there when they retire. So I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own money and put it in a personal savings account that they own and that the Government cannot take away.

Once again, my opponent takes a different approach. You know, he talked about protecting Social Security. I want to remind you and I want you to remind your friends and neighbors that he voted eight times to tax Social Security benefits. That's his record. He can run, but he cannot hide.

It's the job of the President to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. The other night at the debates, when I talked about Social Security, he defended the status quo. He had nothing to offer to our younger workers. In a new term, I'll bring Republicans and Democrats together and strengthen Social Security so our children and our grandchildren will have a system available for them when they retire.

And the fifth clear choice in this election is on the values that are so crucial to keeping America's families strong. And here, my opponent and I are miles apart. I stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law. I believe marriage is a sacred commitment. It is a pillar of our civilization, and I will always defend it. This is not a partisan issue. When Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act during my predecessor's time, defining marriage as a union of a man and a woman, the vast majority of Democrats supported that bill and my predecessor signed it into law. But Senator Kerry was part of an out-of-the-mainstream minority that voted against the Defense of Marriage Act.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I believe reasonable people can find common ground on difficult issues. Republicans and Democrats and many citizens on both sides of the life issue came together and agreed we should ban the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion. I signed that law. But Senator Kerry was part of an out-of-the-mainstream minority that voted against the ban.

In the course of this campaign, he said the heart and soul of America can be found in Hollywood.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. No, most American families do not look to Hollywood as a source of values. The heart and soul of America is found in places like Alamogordo, New Mexico.

All these choices make this one of the most important elections in our history. The security and prosperity of our country, the health and the education of families, the retirement of our seniors, the direction of our culture

are all at stake. And the decision is in the best of hands; it's in the hands of the American people.

I see a good day for America. I clearly see a better tomorrow for all of us. One of my favorite quotes was written by a Texan from right down the road in El Paso, Texas. He said, "Sarah and I live on the east side of the mountain. It's the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It's the side to see the day that is coming, not to see the day that is gone." You know, when you really listen to the words in this campaign, my opponent has spent much of this campaign talking about the day that is gone. I'm talking about the day that is coming.

We've been through a lot together over the last 3¾ years. Because we've done the hard work of climbing the mountain, we see the valley below. We'll protect our families. We'll build on our prosperity. We'll defend our deepest values. We will spread freedom and liberty around the world, and that will help us keep the peace we all want.

You know, when I campaigned in New Mexico 4 years ago asking for the vote, I said that if you gave me the honor to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thanks for coming. I appreciate you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. at Alamogordo High School. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the Republican National Convention; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization.

Statement on the Death of James Cardinal Hickey

October 24, 2004

Cardinal James Hickey was an inspirational spiritual leader who brought comfort to the sick and help and hope to those in need. He was a caring and compassionate man. For 20 years, he led the Archdiocese of Washington with great dignity and conviction. He will be deeply missed by his church,

the Washington community, and all of the people throughout America whose lives he touched so deeply. Laura and I send our prayers and condolences to his family, friends, and loved ones.

Proclamation 7837—United Nations Day, 2004

October 24, 2004

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

On United Nations Day, we commemorate the founding of the United Nations in 1945 and recognize its many contributions to advancing peace and human rights around the world.

Our Declaration of Independence and the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaim the equal value and dignity of every human life. That dignity is honored by the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women, protection of private property, free speech, equal justice, and religious tolerance. These founding documents affirm that the bright line between justice and injustice is the same in every age, every culture, and every nation.

Today, the United Nations is helping advance these ideals in many places around the globe. The U.N. assisted Afghanistan in making history when Afghan women and men voted in a democratic Presidential election earlier this month. In Sudan, Liberia, Haiti, and other nations, the U.N. has been working to bring security, stability, and humanitarian assistance to people in need. From Africa to the Caribbean to Asia, the U.N. is helping to turn societies away from old conflicts, overcome persistent poverty, and fight HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

The United States remains committed to the high ideals of the U.N. as stated in its charter: "To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war . . . to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights . . . and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,
President of the United States of America,